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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
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Location: 2090 Kittredge Street
Southwest corner of Kittredge Street and Shattuck Avenue
Berkeley, Alameda County, California

U.S.G.S. Berkeley 7.5' Quadrangle

Present Owner: City of Berkeley, Board of Library Trustees

Present Occupants: Berkeley Public Library, main branch

Present Use: Public Library

Significance: As a major civic work designed by distinguished local architect James Plachek, the Berkeley Public Library is both architecturally and culturally significant. The building, which is sited prominently on the corner of Kittredge Street and Shattuck Avenue in downtown Berkeley, exhibits Moderne formal characteristics which were popular during the 1920s and 1930s.

Construction of the building began in 1929 and continued through the Great Depression through the support of the local community and came to symbolize the city's progress and commitment to public education. The Berkeley Public Library is significant as a civic monument which was highly regarded by the public at its opening and has gained prestige over its long history. The Library continues to serve as an anchor in its urban and social context.

On April 19, 1982 the library was designated a Berkeley City Landmark and on June 25 of the same year the building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

PART I – HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. **Date of Erection:** Construction of the Berkeley Public Library began in 1929. The Library was dedicated on January 31, 1931 and officially opened on February 2, 1931.
2. **Architect:** The Berkeley Public Library was designed by architect James Plachek. Plachek was one of Berkeley's most prolific architects from the 1910s to the 1940s. The body of his work in Berkeley included city commissions as well as a great variety of private work. His appointment as architect for the Berkeley Public Library was almost a foregone conclusion, as he had been a Library Building Committee member since 1921 and counted two of the Berkeley branch libraries among his local institutional work.

The son of Czech immigrants, Plachek was born in Chicago in 1883 where he later studied and trained both as an engineer and as an architect. After working for several Chicago area architects and attending the Chicago Art Institute, Plachek moved to San Francisco shortly after the 1906 earthquake to study the effects of fire on building materials. He remained and worked for several years as a draftsman for William Weeks and other local architects.

Weeks was quite well known at that time for his residential work in Monterey County, and was quickly becoming an expert in school buildings during the years Plachek worked for him. Most of Weeks' buildings were diverse historical Period Revival styles popular at that time. The eclecticism of Weeks' work may have influenced Plachek's work in this direction when he later began practice on his own.

After returning to Chicago for a brief period, Plachek came back to the Bay Area and set up his own architectural practice in Berkeley in 1912 which endured until his death in 1948. Plachek's practice flourished and he became involved in community affairs. By 1919, he had served as president of the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce and had been the subject of a feature article in *The Architect and Engineer*. A 1922 article in the *Berkeley Courier* praised his forward thinking, his community involvement and the strength of his architectural practice.

Plachek's earlier work, dating from the 1910s, ranged in style from Classical Revival to Craftsman, such as the Craftsman style John Muir School of 1915 in the Claremont neighborhood and the North Congregational Church, nicknamed the "Bungalow Church," in North Berkeley. Work dating from the 1920s indicates his interest in Mediterranean and Period Revival styles, as exemplified by the classically-inspired Federal Land Bank of 1922 in Berkeley. Most of Plachek's work of the 1930s, including the Berkeley Public Library, was in the Art Deco or Moderne styles. Later work in the 1940s, such as the State Farm Insurance Building in Berkeley's Civic Center, completed in 1948 at the end of Plachek's career, can be described as streamlined Moderne.

Plachek's work also included the 1938 headquarters of the Federal Land Bank, which is located at the Berkeley Civic Center, the UC Theatre on University Avenue, the Hotel Central on Shattuck Avenue, Sill's grocery store at University and Walnut, and various office buildings in Berkeley and Oakland, including his own offices in the Heywood building of 1917 on Shattuck Avenue. In addition to these Berkeley buildings, Plachek designed the Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco, the San Mateo Congregational Church and various other works in the greater Bay Area and Southern California.

While Plachek's architecture does not exhibit a great deal of intellectual rigor, especially in comparison to the work of some of his better-known contemporaries and predecessors, it reflects his fluency in a variety of architectural traditions. As a popular local architect, he utilized various architectural languages as necessary to suit the requirements of program, design and context. Plachek's significance lies in his quantity of work over a relatively long period of time. Many of his buildings still stand today, contributors to the fabric of Berkeley's architectural tradition.

A contributor to the Berkeley Public Library was Simeon Pelenc, a craftsman who collaborated with Plachek on the design of the decorative plaster frieze panels (*sgraffito*) on the exterior of the building. In addition to collaborating with Plachek on the design and imagery of the panels, Pelenc executed the plaster panels. The library's *sgraffito* is considered to be the best extant example of work of this kind in Northern California.

3. **Original and subsequent owners:** The owner of the building since its construction in 1931 has been the City of Berkeley, Board of Library Trustees.
4. **Builder, contractor, suppliers:** K.E. Parker Company Builders was the contractor for the project. The total cost for construction of the library was \$300,000, including \$90,000 for furnishings. At the time of construction the library's book collection consisted of 125,000 volumes.
5. **Original plans and construction:** Berkeley Public Library is a rectangular building comprising four stories plus a basement occupying the southwest corner of Kittredge Street and Shattuck Avenue. The library is approximately 170 feet by 95 feet by 50 feet tall. The long elevation of the building faces Kittredge Street, facing north. The walls rise to a parapet above the flat roof. The main entrance is on Kittredge Street with a service entrance on the west elevation and an emergency exit located at the back of the building on the south elevation. The walls are cement plaster with significant ornamentation.

Original Plachek drawings are extant and are in the possession of the Library. A contemporary description of the building is included in Part II, sections A, B and C of this report.

6. **Alterations and additions:** The library, which was heralded as new, modern, and spacious at the time of its construction, continued to function adequately for most of its first three decades. Increased demands and acquisitions began to strain the library by the mid-1950s. Beginning in the late 1950s and continuing into the 1960s, numerous studies and planning evaluations of the library concluded that it was time for reorganization and some degree of expansion. These particular studies concluded in the 1963 construction of a four-story addition in the southwest corner of the building which provided additional space for the Art and Music Collection and for staff offices.

While some maintenance has occurred throughout the building, including the repainting of the exterior in 1957 and 1973, and exterior repairs and repainting in 1996, the building remains essentially in its original condition. A list of specific alterations is included in Part II, sections E and F of this report.

B. Historical Context

The Berkeley Public Library is one of Berkeley's most cherished public institutions, a symbol of the lively intellectual spirit within the Berkeley community. Within four years of Berkeley's incorporation, private citizens opened the first library in 1882, which operated as a free reading room. In 1893, the Holmes Public Library opened as a membership library on Shattuck Avenue, in two rooms donated by Francis Kittredge Shattuck. During its first two years of operation, the Holmes library, located one block north of the present library, operated as a privately funded library where borrowers had to pay an advance annual fee of one dollar in order to borrow library materials. After 1895, the library began receiving public funding and was renamed the Berkeley Public Library.

Aided by the establishment of streetcar transportation, Berkeley's population expanded substantially in the early 1900s and soon outgrew its library quarters. The city applied for and won a \$40,000 Carnegie grant for the construction of a permanent library building, and in January of 1905, a new library, designed by University of California Berkeley campus architect John Galen Howard, opened on the corner of Shattuck and Kittredge, the site of the present building.

The new library was already well utilized by the time of the 1906 earthquake and fire, an event which led to a great population explosion and building boom in the city of Berkeley as thousands fled the devastated city of San Francisco and resettled in Berkeley. While branch facilities extended throughout the city, these were not enough to relieve the pressure on the central library building, and, by 1916, funding via increased taxes was begun towards building a new, larger main library. Evidence of the public desire for more library space can be seen in various newspaper articles written in the 1920s, which argued the case for a new, larger library building as the city's population continued to grow.

By 1929, sufficient construction funds had been raised through the building fund tax for the construction of a new main library. Despite the onset of the Great Depression, construction proceeded and the new main library, designed by architect James Plachek, opened to the public in February 1931.

The opening of the Berkeley Public Library in 1931 was heralded by a *Berkeley Daily Gazette* headline, "New Library is Held Symbol of City's Progress." The Berkeley Chamber of Commerce described the new library as "one of the finest, most beautiful, modern and complete public library buildings to be found anywhere in a city the size of Berkeley." The construction of the new building was seen as the expression of civic pride and confidence overcoming the economic uncertainty brought on by the beginning of the Great Depression.

PART II – ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character

One of the few examples of architectural criticism of the Berkeley Public Library is offered by the architect William Garren, a contemporary of Plachek's who characterized himself as a modernist. (*The Architect and Engineer*, January, 1931) Garren begins his assessment of the library by commenting that the "Berkeley Public Library problem" was similar to that of public libraries throughout the country at the time. He pinpoints the key design challenge of the library – its dual role as a place for bringing books and people together, and as an urban monument. Garren's belief that a library should be for people and their books, and that monumentality would come from the community spirit and beauty of the structure may have influenced his assessment that Plachek never really succeeded in integrating these two primary roles. While admitting to the limitations of cost and public opinion, Garren nevertheless writes,

This... has here, as in most modern architecture, worked to separate the interior from the exterior design both in character and handling. (*The Architect and Engineer*, January, 1931, p. 36)

Although Garren faulted Plachek for not integrating the library's interior and exterior, Plachek was of a different opinion, and viewed his new building as an integral design throughout, as evidenced in his own words:

The building is done in the modern spirit and aptly expresses its plan as well as its construction. A conception of such simplicity would result in sternness were it not for the softening influence of the sculptural work and the color notes. The character of the design is determined by the requirements and limitations of reinforced concrete and steel construction, expressing in a straightforward manner the lines of typical post and lintel design. (Ibid.)

In support of his argument, Plachek did use a number of subtle devices which attempted to tie together the interior and exterior of the building and strengthened the understanding of the building as an integrated whole. The decorative *sgraffito* panels are a part of the building's exterior skin, etched directly into the cement plaster, strengthening Plachek's intention to "keep the line between the building and the sculpture indistinguishable." (Ibid.) Furthermore, in a play on architecture and surface design, the *sgraffito* on the west entry pylon shows a zig zag stair which mimics the real stair directly behind it and visible through the window. While a far cry from Modern architects who allowed only the structure and material of the building to serve as ornament, Plachek sought to enhance the building with sculptures that are "Mayan in character and express just a fanciful thought in a rhythm of curves and straight lines and give a modern expression to an old art." (Ibid.)

Despite Plachek's assertion, a dichotomy clearly exists between exterior and interior in that Plachek deliberately chose to design the library's exterior in "the modern spirit," while the planning of interior spaces is designed more closely after classical models. This discontinuity was common at that time, when the rules governing a building's street facade were quite different from the requirements dictated by program. While the interior spaces are informed by a classical and formal sensibility, this spirit was not extended to the library's urban setting.

The exterior facade of the Berkeley Public Library clearly takes its cues from ornamental Art Deco architecture, born of the Paris Exposition des Arts Decoratifs in 1925. The decorative phase of Art Deco borrowed loosely from a variety of sources, including Cubism and the Mayan forms used by architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright in the 1920s. This connection can be seen in the interlocking and plain geometric linear ornamental motifs typically found on Art Deco buildings. Decorative forms such as zigzags and chevrons were applied to the exterior skin of the building, often over doors, windows and as panels, bands and at rooftops, as well as in public lobbies at elevators and stairs. Buildings in the Art Deco style often stressed verticality, expressing structural piers which were devoid of

ornament, except at the top. The Berkeley Public Library's exterior elevations exhibit many of these particular design elements.

As the Art Deco style of architecture affected primarily the exterior massing and surface of buildings, the architect was left free to render the interior spaces in a manner which best suited the building program or use. The interior plan and layout of Plachek's building relies primarily on a loose interpretation of classical models in its symmetry and the grand formality of its main rooms. The main entry and interior monumental stair are located along the central axis of the building, with the Lobby directly behind it in the physical center of the building. The central axis culminates at the stacks in the back of the building. The Reading Room and Reference Room are located along the building's cross axis, reached through symmetrically opposed openings in the Lobby wall. The entire first floor is set above ground level on an interior podium, a device often used in classical buildings to lend grandeur to the main floor spaces and draw out the sequence of entry into the building.

Various elements, however, subvert the symmetry of the plan while enhancing the function of the building, namely the insertion of a front stair leading to the Children's Room from the entry vestibule and the placement and articulation of the Periodical Room and adjacent stair off the Reading Room.

Precedent may have also guided Plachek in the design of the library's interior spaces. Although deliberately distinct from the demolished Carnegie library, various elements of Plachek's building gesture indirectly to John Galen Howard's earlier building. The tall windows set above a basement level recall the high arched windows of the earlier library and signal the location of a generous reading room beyond. The windows and the generous spaces beyond seem to have more in common with Howard's nearby Doe Library on the University of California Berkeley campus, while the *sgraffito* panels have precedent on his 1915 Hilgard Hall, also on campus.

2. Condition of Fabric

Overall, the material fabric of the Berkeley Public Library is in good condition. Deteriorated concrete and exterior cement plaster were repaired as part of FEMA assistance in 1996. Interior materials exhibit normal wear and tear. The Stacks are considered seismically unsound, but are otherwise in good physical condition.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall Dimensions

The Berkeley Central Library is a rectangular building comprising four stories plus basement occupying the southwest corner of Kittredge Street and Shattuck Avenue. The building is approximately 170 feet by 95 feet by 50 feet tall, with its long elevation on Kittredge Street, facing north. The walls rise to a parapet above the flat roof. The main entrance is on Kittredge Street, with a service entrance on the west elevation and an emergency exit located at the back of the building on the south elevation. The walls are cement plaster with significant ornamentation.

2. Walls

The cement plaster wall plane and pylon are the defining elements of the exterior walls. The painted plaster wall surfaces and structural elements comprise the primary building surface and give the exterior its smooth appearance. Tall, wide pylons, decorative pylon caps and vertical fins give relief to the otherwise plain wall surface. The exterior decoration is Mayan in character and was intended lend the building character beyond its mere structure and function. The horizontality of the building's base is balanced by the verticality of the pylons and windows. The building is further enlivened by articulation of the vertical structural elements and ornamental graphics which are an integral part of the building's surface.

The north and east elevations are the most visible urban elements of the building. Within the simple rectangular mass of the building, an organization of base, middle and top is implied by surface manipulation and window placement. The horizontal band of tall windows punches through each elevation and lends a transparency to the otherwise massive building. The ten tall windows at the northeast corner of the library indicate the three-story space of the Reading Room. At the northwest corner of the library, four pairs of shorter windows mark the location of the Reference Room and Children's Library, while three medium height windows light the tall Lobby beyond. Three original copper light fixtures remain mounted under the main entry soffit as somewhat exotic ornaments.

Between the pylons on these elevations, tall straight arched metal windows proceed along the walls above a horizontal strip of *sgraffito* panels. The windows are significant in opening up the otherwise heavy facade and in

marking the major rooms beyond. The horizontal strip of *sgraffito* panels form a decorative frieze on the two primary elevations below the window sill line and ornament the two shorter pylons framing the main entry.

Sgraffito panels are produced by scoring the design in the soft cement plaster before it hardens so that the design becomes an integral part of the building's surface. The *sgraffito* panels form a decorative frieze of the two primary elevations below the window sill line and ornament the two shorter pylons framing the main entry. The panels were intended to soften the harshness of the building. The green and cream-colored *sgraffito* frieze suggests a "Treasure of Knowledge" (Berkeley Public Library 1931 formal opening Bulletin). The frieze features figures making, reading, bearing and seeing books. The figures have been described as Egyptian in character because of their representation in $\frac{3}{4}$ view, with head in side view and torso in frontal view. The two vertically-oriented *sgraffito* panels incised in the entry pylons feature more figures ascending the "steps of knowledge."

The west and south elevations are less visible and much less articulated than the north and east elevations. To a lesser degree, they continue the expression of the building's construction and function. The west elevation fronts a parking lot and is a simplified version of the two primary elevations. This elevation is composed of three parts; the northern portion which marks the Reference room and Children's Room; the central portion which marks the Art & Music Room and various staff areas; and the lower, southern portion which was added in 1963. A ramped service entrance at the southwest corner gives access to the Basement level.

The south elevation, like the west elevation, has been altered to accommodate additional office space and emergency exits. This elevation is hardly visible from the exterior, as it abuts or is extremely close to the adjoining building. Rectangular windows on this wall light offices in the western half and stacks in the eastern half of the elevation. Windows in the central bay indicate the location of the library's main stair. A fire escape provides egress via a narrow alley which continues out to the parking lot on the west.

The west wall is unornamented, with the exception of the pylon in the northwest corner and the incised spandrel panels below the three Children's room windows. The pylon completes the structural articulation which wraps around from the front elevation.

The double band of straight arched windows at the Reference Room and Children's Library continues along the northern half of the west elevation, signaling the location and character of the rooms beyond. The windows are similar to those on the east and north elevations described above. Original steel sash windows remain at Basement level, in the central portion of the west elevation and along portions of the south elevation.

3. Structural System

The building's structure is expressed on the primary exterior elevations, enhanced with pylons and exaggerated window mullions marking column locations. The building is a concrete-encased steel frame with reinforced concrete floors. A reinforced concrete joist and girder system supports the third floor Children's Room, which also forms the ceiling over the Reference Room. The building rests on a reinforced concrete spread footing foundation, with 12-inch thick reinforced concrete Basement walls. Upper walls are poured-in-place reinforced concrete with lath and plaster surface. Steel trusses span the building in the east-west direction and support the concrete roof deck. Ceilings are suspended from the steel trusses. The five stack levels are supported by an independent steel frame system which comprise a wholly integrated and independent structure from the main library building, as the steel frame is not tied in to the frame of the main building. This structure was commonly used at that time for library stack systems. Until recently, it could be found in similar form in numerous libraries in the Bay Area, including the San Francisco Public Library, the Burlingame Public Library and Doe Library on the University of California campus.

4. Openings

Two types of windows articulate the exterior walls. The first are large, pointed-arch windows which articulate the principal facades. These windows consist of alternating rows of fixed and operable sash. They were manufacturer by Kawneer and constructed of a chromium-nickel-aluminum alloy, which was considered to be a rustless state-of-the-art system at the time. Operable sash is awning-type, with steel limiting arms and bronze sash locks. Operable sash in the Reading Room windows utilize a gear-type mechanism to control the opening range, controlled by long rope pulls. These large windows occur in 15-light, 12-light and 6-light configurations.

The second window type is a standard rectangular steel awning window which occurs primarily in the Basement level, above the sidewalk.

Original bronze transoms remain above the three main entry doors.

5. Roof

The library's roof is generally flat, sloping down gently to the north. Roof drains connect to leaders located behind the pylons on the library's north elevation. The main stair, elevator machine room, mechanical room and skylights project above the roof's surface. The parapet is approximately five feet high on all sides. The original skylights were built with steel protective cages and wire glass. They contribute natural light to the Lobby, Stacks and Mitchell Room below.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor Plans

The Berkeley Central Library is arranged around a four-story Lobby with a full Basement. The Basement level is approximately five feet below grade. The first floor occurs approximately six feet above grade and, with the exception of the street-level Vestibule, occupies the entire building footprint as well. The three upper floor plans are much smaller because of the large volumes occupied by the Reading Room, Lobby and Reference Room. The Stacks are located at the back of the building on intermediate levels, starting on the first floor and rising a total of five levels to the main building's four. (Refer to attached floor plans and sections for further information.)

The Lobby acts as the functional core of the library. Entry from the street is through a Vestibule, the ceiling of which is formed by a mezzanine Balcony above. From this relatively compressed space, one turns and ascends a half-flight of steps to the central part of the Lobby on the first floor which is a soaring, four-story space.

In plan, the Lobby consists of three spaces: the low-ceilinged Vestibule, the Balcony above and the soaring central Lobby. Walls in the central Lobby rise 37 feet to a beamed ceiling. Openings in the east and west walls lead to the Reading Room and Reference Room, respectively. The south wall is expressed as a screen because of the numerous openings onto each level of stacks. At the first floor level, the center opening gives access to a shelving office.

The Reading Room is located adjacent to the main Lobby on the first floor and serves the public as a gathering space and as a grand room for pleasure reading and learning. In plan the Reading Room is a large rectangular space entered through three openings from the Lobby to the west and three arched openings in the south wall. These low arched openings lead directly to the Periodical Room and the rear stair.

The Reference Room, located in the northwest corner of the building, sustains the academic, research-oriented arm of the Berkeley Public Library. In plan, the Reference Room is a rectangular room entered from the Lobby to the east and the stair and elevator Lobby and Art & Music Room to the south. The importance of the collection and public access to it is emphasized by its location directly off the central Lobby. The Reference Room is similar to the Reading Room, but is substantially smaller, rising to a height of twenty feet. The northeast corner of the room is interrupted by the north stair.

The Children's Room is located directly above the Reference Room, and originally had its own entrance directly from the Lobby vestibule via the north stair which is now used only as an emergency exit. The main access is from the stair and elevator Lobby to the south. The Children's Room is located on an upper floor on the western side of the building so as to capture the best views of the San Francisco Bay.

The Periodical Room is located in the southeast corner of the building. Sole access to this room is through two arched openings from the Reading Room. Originally called the California Room, it was finished to harmonize with the Reading Room, although it is substantially smaller in size and scale.

The Mitchell Room, formerly the Exhibit Room, is a two-story space located above the Periodical Room. The room is currently used as staff offices and meeting areas.

The book Stacks rise in six tiers in the central portion of the south side of the building. The layout of the stacks is rather straightforward, with a central stair for patrons and a book lift in the northwest corner. The first tier of stacks is directly accessible from the central Lobby, but the upper tiers are reached only via the central stair and steps near the main stair landings.

The Art & Music Room and Staff Offices are housed in the southwest corner of the building in spaces which were expanded in 1963. The Staff Meeting Room on the Fourth Floor contains an original Kitchen and Bathroom.

2. Stairs and Elevator

Three staircases rise to and from various floor levels within the library. The main circulation stair (central stair) and elevator are located at the back of the building and rise from the Basement to the roof. A secondary stair (north stair) rises from the Basement to the entry vestibule and continues up to the Children's Room, while a third stair (east stair) ascends from the Basement, lands behind the Reading Room and continues up to the Mitchell Room. The stacks have an independent stair system which is described above.

The elements in these spaces are largely utilitarian in character and provide little ornamentation. Stair treads and risers are smooth, painted concrete with concrete base below painted plaster walls. The treads have safety strips set into the nosing. The central stair and north stair feature oak handrails, painted cast iron newel posts, and wrought iron balusters atop a wood trimmed stringer. Secondary handrails are anchored to the walls with iron brackets. Handrails at the east stair are oak on low plaster walls. The walls are punctured with openings and a wrought iron rod, similar to the railing at the Lobby balcony.

3. Floors

The floors of most rooms in the building are covered in linoleum which is original to the building. The Reading Room and Reference Room both have pale beige-colored linoleum flooring. Other rooms with linoleum flooring include the Children's Room and the Mitchell Room. Marble flooring occurs in the Lobby Vestibule and in the Stacks, where the floor consists of square white marble laid in a steel framework.

4. Walls and Ceilings

The walls throughout the building are textured or smooth painted plaster.

Ceilings vary from highly ornamental to simple. The ceiling in the Reading Room is a highly articulated composition of large and small beams, covered in polychromatic stenciling. Flat areas between beams are covered in acoustic material, painted to blend in with the decorated beams.

The Lobby ceiling is painted in a much simpler fashion, articulated by exposed beams and a central laylight. The Vestibule ceiling is ornamented by flat coffers, with polychromatic stenciling.

Ceilings in other rooms are flat plaster or acoustic material, and painted plaster beams.

5. Openings

Window openings are set into thick plaster walls typically without trim. The building, however, receives large amounts of natural light from windows and laylights.

The Basement receives natural light from sidewalk-level windows. The Lobby is naturally lit by three high windows and a central laylight. The Reference Room is lit by three large windows facing Kittredge Street and several large windows facing the parking lot and landscaped park to the west. The lower half of a tall window lights the Periodical Room from Shattuck Avenue.

The Stacks are naturally lit by steel awning windows in the south and east walls and by six skylights at the upper stack level.

The Mitchell Room is lit by a skylight and one window facing Shattuck Avenue. The skylight which admits daylight to the Mitchell Room is framed in wood and is composed of fifteen frosted glass lights, with three wood panels at each end.

Most historic interior doors are stained oak stile and rail double-panel doors. On some doors the upper panel is a glass light. Several doors, such as those in the Staff Break Room and those in several Restrooms, are painted white. Historic wood doors have flat standard oak trim at the jamb and head.

The door between the Art & Music Room and the front stair hall has been removed, though the transom above the doorway has been retained. The door leading to the Mitchell Room is a wood, six-light door.

6. Decorative Features and Trim

Decorative features in the building are expressed in marble, wood and metal.

Marble is used most extensively in the Lobby and Vestibule, where marble clads the floor, walls, stair treads and risers, and baseboard. Spandrels in the Lobby's south wall are composed of a lattice pattern of colored marbles.

The three openings between the Lobby and Reading Room are trimmed in polished gray marble; the openings between the Lobby and Stacks are trimmed in gray and red Egyptian marble. Fireplaces in the Mitchell Room and Periodicals Room have marble surrounds and scored concrete hearths. Elsewhere, red Egyptian marble is used as baseboard throughout the building.

Stained oak bookcases and paneling are found in the Reading Room, Reference Room and Children's Room. The Children's Room also has a stained oak baseboard. Unique features of the wood casework includes built-in oak benches with lift-up tops in the Children's Room.

Metal ornament includes stamped bronze air grilles, cast bronze newel post rosettes, painted iron floral grilles at the top of the Lobby stairs, and bronze plaques.

7. Hardware (door hardware)

Historic door hardware consists of bronze escutcheon plates, knobs and hinges. Historic escutcheon plates are decorated with a zig-zag motif. The bronze hinges, two of which are found on each historic door, have bronze balls at the top and bottom.

8. Systems and Equipment

a. HVAC

The original forced air system is still in use today. Air is circulated through metal grilles and cross-ventilation is provided by operable windows. Most of the mechanical equipment is located in the southeast corner of the Basement. The system consists of a boiler and four fan units which service the majority of spaces in the building. The Children's Room is serviced by three additional fan units located in the Roof penthouse. Fresh air and exhaust chases are attached to the southeast corner of the building. The underside of the Mechanical Room, below the Basement floor, is used as a return air plenum.

Metal grilles punctuate the wall surface between the windows in the Reading Room, the Reference Room and the Children's Room.

b. Lighting

Few of the original incandescent light fixtures, which were designed by Plachek and manufactured locally, remain in the building. The exception occurs in the Balcony above the Lobby Vestibule, where three of the glass "waterfall" type fixtures hang from the Lobby ceiling above. Originally, the central Lobby and Vestibule contained twelve of this type of fixture. The original bronze suspension rods remain, supporting new fluorescent lights.

Fifteen original light suspension rods remain in the Reading Room as a reminder of the historic glass incandescent fixtures with metal discs which originally hung in this room. The Reference Room contained similar fixtures which were suspended from bronze rods ornamented midway. The bronze rods from the eleven original light fixtures remain hung from the ceiling in the Reference Room.

Fifteen light fixtures in the Children's Room were likely of a similar design, mounted at ceiling level. Various other ceiling-mounted and suspended fixtures were originally located throughout the building. Most of these

fixtures have been replaced with linear fluorescent fixtures. The Periodical Room also contains bronze rods from the original pendant light fixtures.

Wiring and electrical supply has been modified over the life of the building to include power for the staff computer system and for public access terminals. The ad-hoc system is currently strained to maximum capacity.

c. Plumbing

Most of the original plumbing fixtures in the building have been removed. Originally, sixteen toilets, thirteen lavatories, one sink and two urinals were distributed among a Basement Men's Bathroom and Staff Bathroom, a First Floor Staff Bathroom, Second Floor Women's Bathroom and Staff Bathroom, Third Floor Boy's Bathroom, Girl's Bathroom and Staff Bathroom, and Fourth Floor Staff Bathroom, and Kitchen. The original white porcelain fixtures remain in the Fourth Floor Bathroom and Kitchen. Men's and Women's Bathrooms on the Basement and Second Floors have been altered to meet handicapped requirements. Other bathrooms have been demolished. Bathrooms were characterized by ceramic tile floors and base; original toilet partitions were marble with paneled wood doors.

9. Furnishings (desks, tables and chairs, display cases, card catalog)

Original oak furnishings include oak tables and chairs, oak desks and display cases. The tables and chairs which remain in the Children's Room are scaled appropriately for children. Drawings of this furniture are included in the original drawing set.

D. Site

The Berkeley Public Library is located at the corner of Kittredge Street and Shattuck Avenue in the heart of Berkeley's main commercial district and is adjacent to Berkeley's civic center. The Berkeley BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) station and Berkeley High School are located within two blocks of the library. A landscaped sidewalk plaza exists east of the library along Shattuck Avenue, providing a shady outdoor area which partially blocks the view of the library from a distance. A small landscaped park and several parking places occupy an open area on the west side of the building. West of the small park and completing the block is a two-story parking structure. South of the existing building is the Art Deco United Artists Theatre, built a few years after the Berkeley Public Library.

E. Exterior Alterations and Additions

The exterior has been repainted a number of times, in 1957, 1973, and again in 1996. The 1963 addition to the library extended the service ramp and entry to the new building wing. The wing is one story shorter than the original building, with three aluminum windows above a covered service door on the west. The addition blocked three pairs of original windows on the south elevation, eliminating natural light at the stair landings. The exterior of the wing is covered in cement plaster and painted to match the adjacent building.

In 1975, the original bronze and chrome entry doors on Kittredge Street were replaced with two pairs of anodized aluminum doors and a central aluminum display case which projects beyond the wall plane. An after-hours book and video depository was inserted in one of the Basement level window openings on the Kittredge Street elevation in the late 1980s. In 1996, the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake damage to the building was repaired and light sconces were installed.

F. Interior Alterations and Additions

The Lobby has undergone the most alteration of all the spaces in the building. The original smooth, almost sinuous transition from the vestibule up to the central Lobby was compromised by the addition of metal and glass doors in the vestibule in 1975, as well as by the intrusion of miscellaneous bookcases, bulletin boards, magazine racks and a window display blocking the center entrance doors along the north wall. In addition, five surface-mounted fluorescent lights have been installed in five rows of the plaster checkerboard vestibule ceiling.

An original wood door separating the Lobby from the Reference Room was removed at an unknown date and a stenciled plaster ornament above the opening has been painted over. Portions of the original linoleum floor have been replaced with a vinyl tile floor. A wood partition was added above the original plaster balcony rail when the Lobby Balcony was converted to office space. The brass handrails are a later addition to the marble stair. Various furnishings have been added to the central Lobby, including information and book return desks, security gates, card catalogs, tables with computer terminals, and a low bulletin wall located directly beyond the stairs. Original light fixtures above the central Lobby have been replaced with a combination of suspended fluorescent linear fixtures and large incandescent glass globes.

Alterations in the Reading Room include the addition of a check-out and library card desk, demountable partitions for staff areas in the northwest corner of the room, a temporary wood partition in the southwest corner of the room and freestanding non-historic wood and metal bookcases. The original light fixtures were replaced with suspended fluorescent fixtures which detract from the character of the space.

A wood and glass partition has been inserted in the northwest corner of the Reference Room. Miscellaneous card catalogs, file cabinets, bookcases, and computer terminals have been added throughout the room. Original pendant light fixtures have been replaced with suspended linear fluorescent fixtures. The east-west ceiling beams were originally stenciled and decorated as in the Reading Room and Lobby; they have been painted over.

Most of the original linoleum floors in the Children's Room are covered with carpet. The plaster walls have been repainted, and portions framing the windows have been painted green and red. Original bookcases have been supplemented with non-original wood and metal bookcases and original pendant light fixtures have been replaced with strip fluorescent fixtures mounted below the ceiling.

In the Periodical Room, three original light fixtures have been replaced with two suspended linear fluorescent fixtures. The linoleum floor has been carpeted.

The Mitchell Room, originally the Exhibit Room, has been recently remodeled to accommodate staff offices and meeting room. The original acoustical tile ceiling, plaster cornice trim, and wood picture rail remain, although the original burlap was removed from the walls, the plaster walls repainted, and the floor carpeted.

Staff offices on the Second Floor were expanded and remodeled in 1963. Most areas of the Basement and Art & Music Room have been remodeled with the addition of fixed and demountable partitions, new shelving, floor coverings, and furnishings.

With the building wing addition in 1963, south-facing windows at the main stair landings were closed off, except at the uppermost landing. Some of the wood handrails have been removed and reattached to the wall along with a ledger strip. Original hardware was retained where possible. The original electric elevator was replaced with a hydraulic elevator in 1975.

PART III - SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings

1. The following is a list of drawings of the original library building by James Plachek. They were made available in blueprint form from the Berkeley Public Library.

No.	Drawing Title	Date	Scale
1	Basement Floor and Furniture Plan	1930	1/8"
2	West, South Elevations	1930	1/8"
3	Longitudinal and Cross Sections	1930	1/8"
4	Basement Plan	1930	1/8"
5	First Floor Plan	1930, '63	1/8"
6	First Mezzanine Plan	1930	1/8"
7	Second Floor Plan	1930	1/8"
8	Second Mezzanine Plan	1930	1/8"
9	Roof Plan	1930	1/8"
10	Reading Room Ceiling Plan	1930	1/4"
11	Section thru Stairs, Exhibit Room	1930	1/4"
12	Section thru Reading Room looking East	1930	1/4"
13	Longitudinal Section	1930	1/4"
14	Section thru Reading Room looking West	1930	1/4"
15	Lobby Vestibule Plan	1930	NTS

16	Lobby Details	1930	1"
17	Lobby - East and West Elevations	1930	1/4"
18	Lobby - South and North Elevations	1930	1/4"
19	Children's Room Floor Plan	1930	1/4"
20	Section thru Ref. Rm. & Children's Rm. - look. North	1930	1/4"
21	Section thru Ref. Rm. & Periodical Rm. - look. West	1930	1/4"
22	Entry Elevation	1930	1/2"
23	Window Details	1930	1"
24	Wood Trim Details	1930	Full
25	Basement Plan, Elevations	1930	1/2"
26	Basement Stair Hall Plan, Elevations	1930	1/2"
27	First Mezzanine Plan and Elevations	1930	1/2"
28	Second Floor (Children's Rm.) Plan and Elevations	1930	1/2"
29	Second Mezzanine Plan and Elevations	1930	1/2"
2	First Floor Furniture Plan	1930	1/8"
3	First Mezzanine Furniture Plan	1930	1/8"
4	Second Floor Furniture Plan	1930	1/8"
No. 1	Light Fixture Details	1930	3"
No. 2	Light Fixture Details	1930	NTS
?No.3	Card Catalog Cases Details	1930	1"
?No.4	Card Catalog Cases & Desk Details - Revised	1930	1"
No. 5	Furnishings & Equipment Plans and Elevations	1930	1"
No. 6	Furnishings & Equipment Plans and Elevations	1930	1"
No. 7	Furnishings & Equipment Plans and Axonometrics	1930	NTS
No. 8	Furnishings & Equipment Plans and Axonometrics	1930	NTS
1	Basement Stack Room Plan	1930	1/2"
2	Second Tier Stack Room Plan	1930	1/2"
3	Third thru Sixth Tiers Stack Room Plan	1930	1/2"
4	Stack Room Section looking East	1930	1/2"
5	Stack Room Section looking South	1930	1/2"
?	Cast Bronze Plaque	1930	Full
Set	Ratcliff Slama Cadwalader Architects Dwgs. for new work in Lobby and Electrical modifications	1973	varies

B. Bibliography

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2. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (not dated).
3. City of Berkeley Application Requesting Designation for Landmark Status, Feb. 4, 1982.

PART IV - PROJECT INFORMATION

This Historic American Buildings Survey has been prepared as a mitigative measure for the Berkeley Public Library Restoration and Expansion, scheduled for construction from January, 1999 thru October, 2000. Administrative Draft Initial Study, 1-17-98 Mitigation #L-1a, L-2a,b,c,d,e.

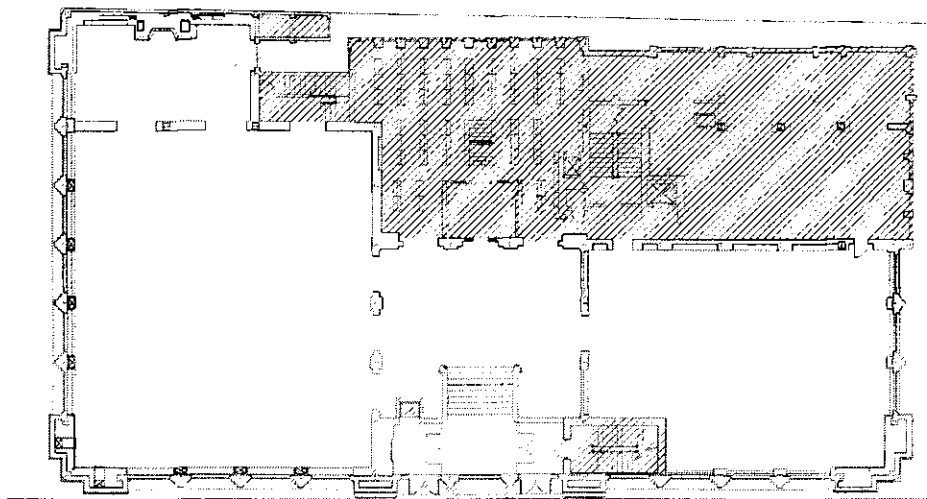
Proposed demolition/alterations:

The proposed Restoration and Expansion will allow retention and restoration of the Lobby, Vestibule, Reading Room, Reference Room, Periodical Room, Children's Room and Mitchell Room. The stair serving the Lobby and Vestibule will be expanded to include a flight of stairs down to the current Basement level.

Spaces which will be demolished in the project are limited to the southern and western sections of the building, and include the Basement, Stacks, the east, central and north stairs, the elevator, and the southwest corner of the building which houses Art and Music, Staff Offices, Meeting Room and Restrooms.

Historic doors and the marble Stack flooring will be salvaged and reused elsewhere in the building.

The addition to the building will occupy the demolished southwest section, the landscaped yard to the immediate west, and a portion of the block which extends to Bancroft Avenue to the south.



Footprint diagram of Berkeley Public Library. Hatched area to be demolished; non-hatched area to be restored.

Agencies, firms, individuals involved in supervising and completing the various components of the documentation:

PAGE & TURNBULL, INC.
Historic Preservation Consultant

WILLIAM A. PORTER
Photographer

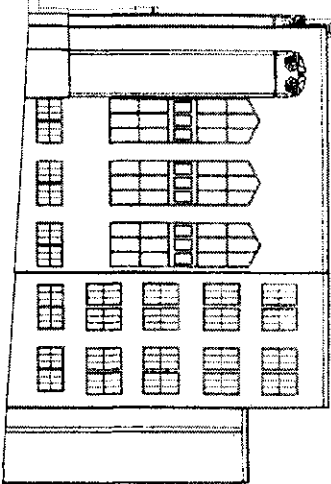
HABS Written Documentation Prepared by:
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HABS Graphic Documentation Prepared by:
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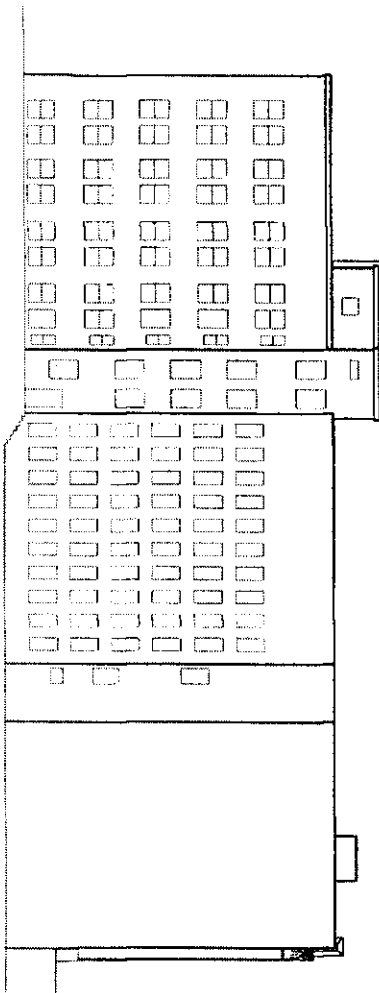
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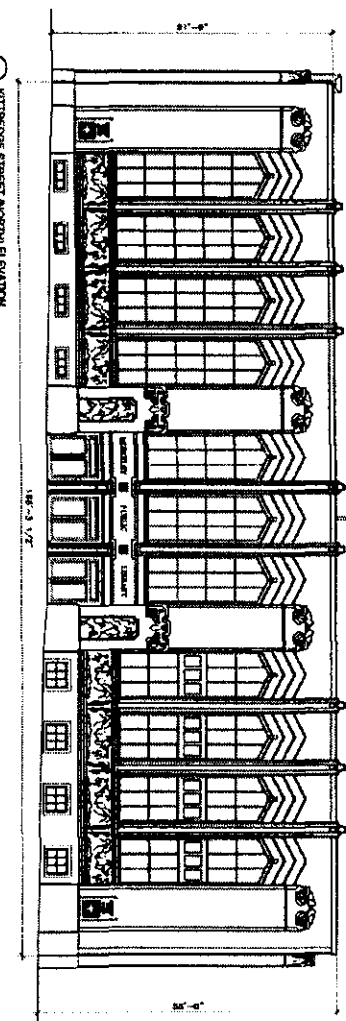
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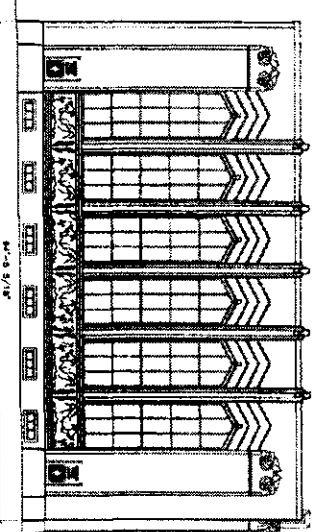
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4 KITTENDALE STREET NORTH ELEVATION



1 SHATLICK AVENUE EAST ELEVATION



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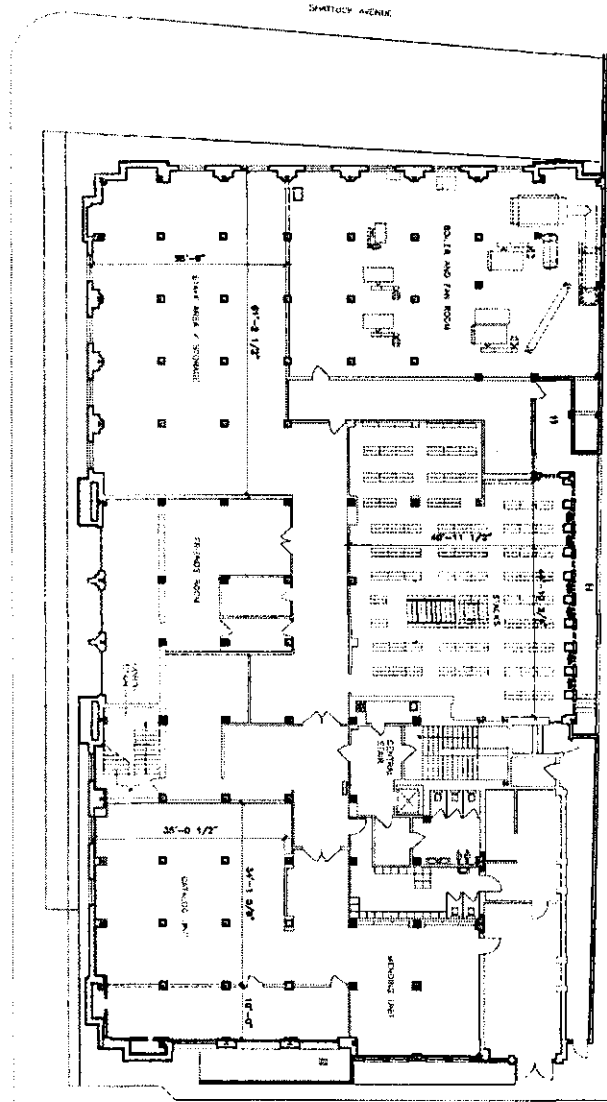
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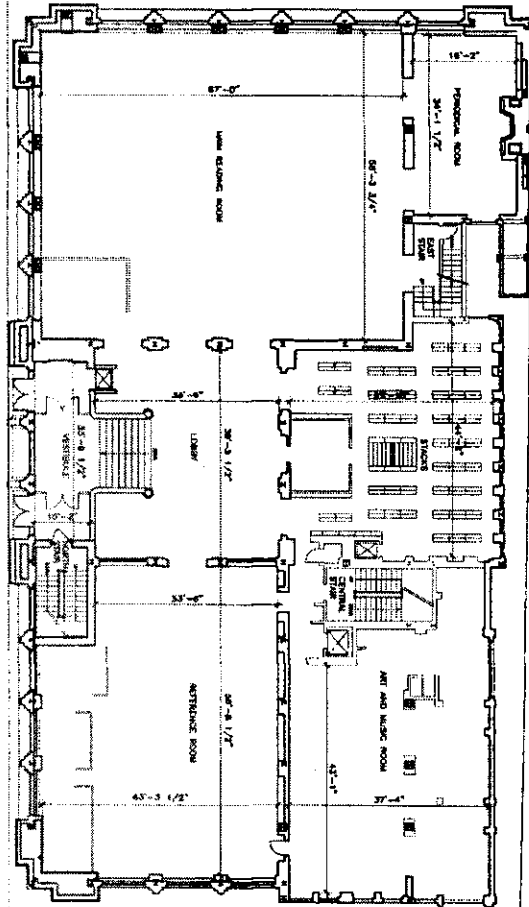
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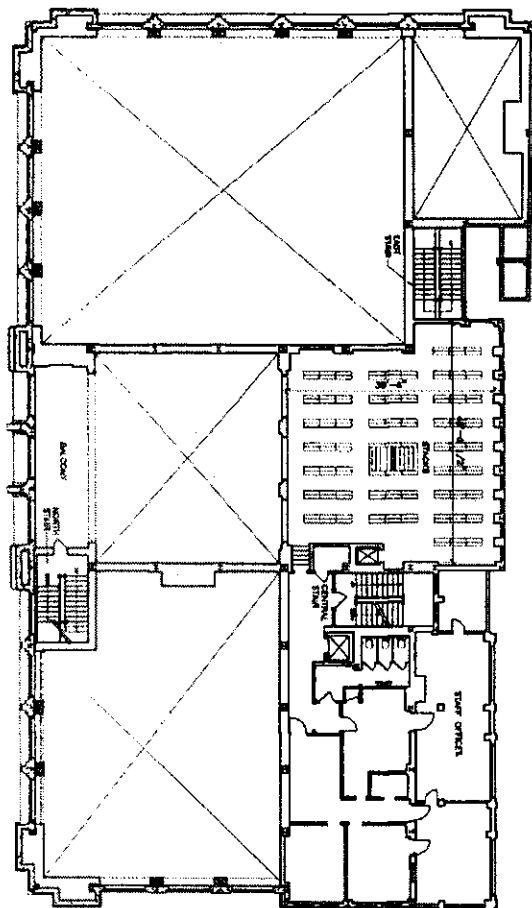
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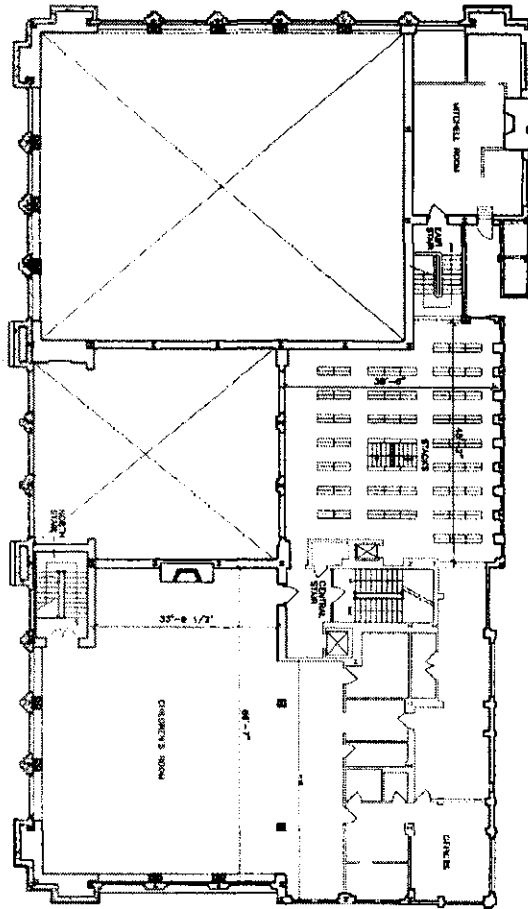


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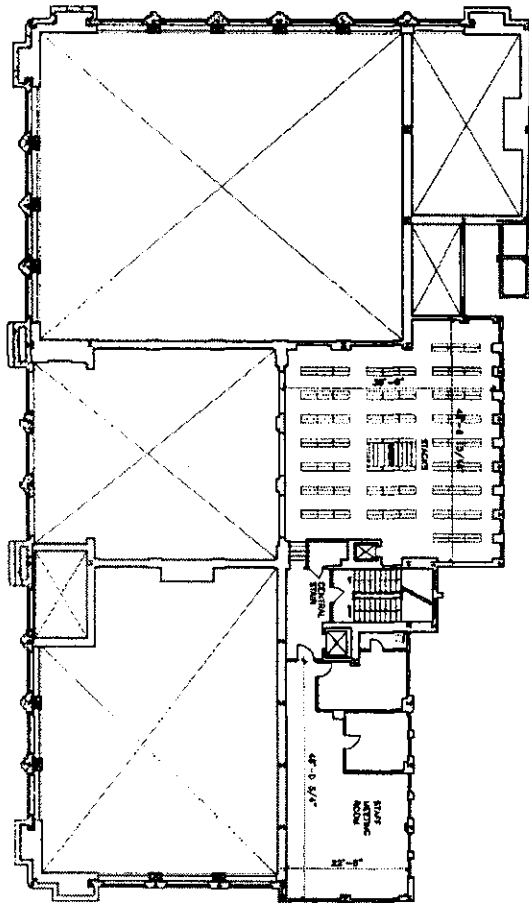
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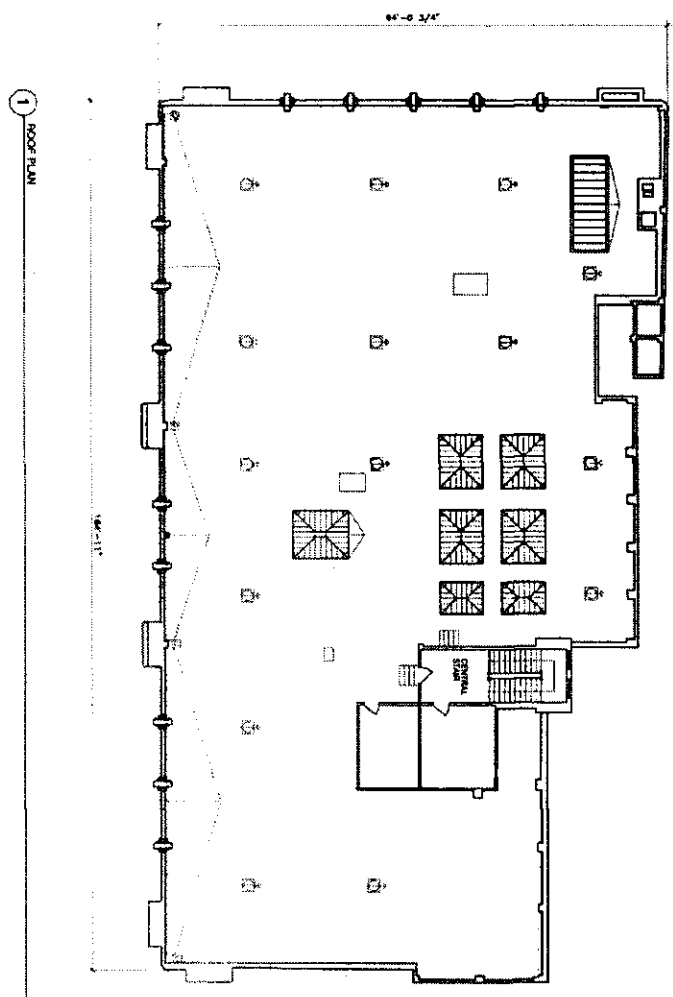
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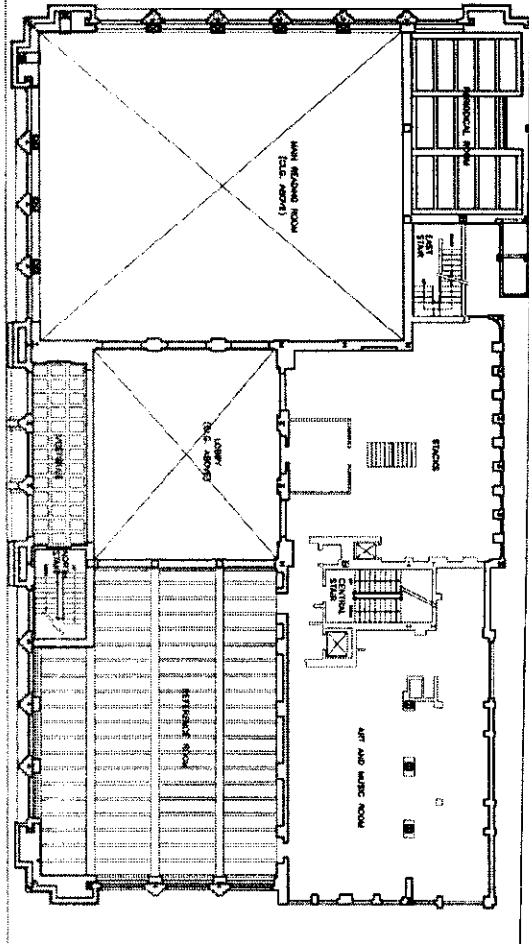
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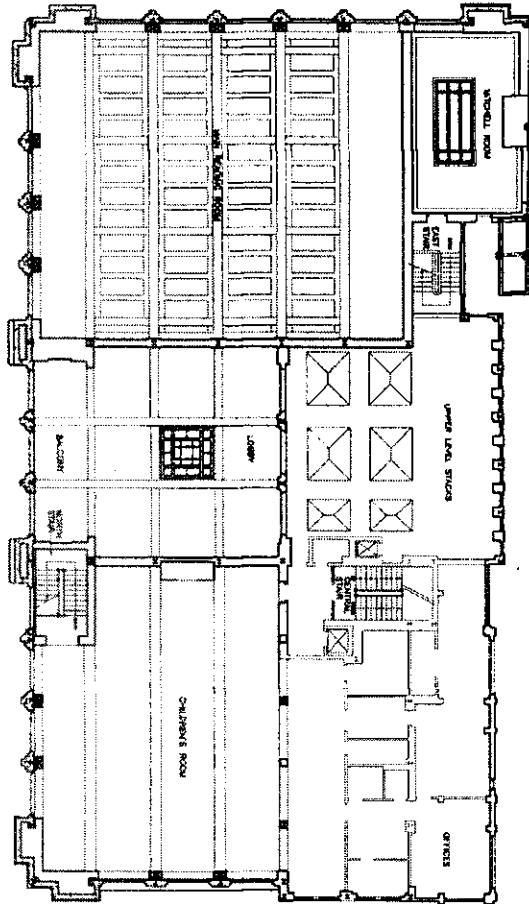
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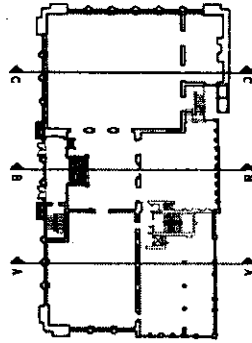


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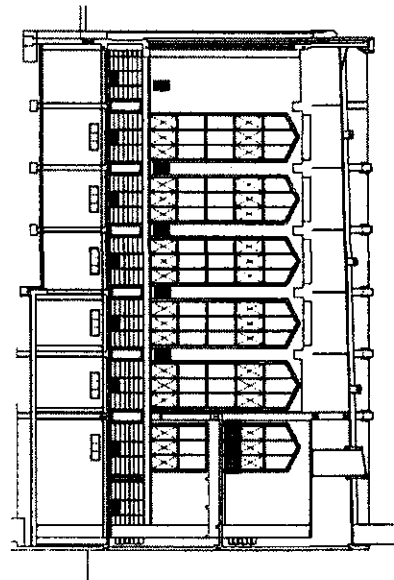
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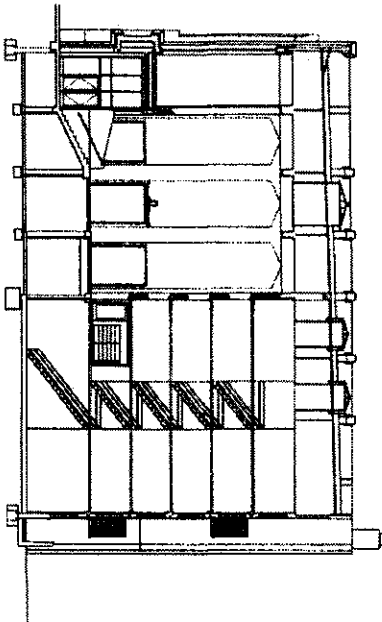
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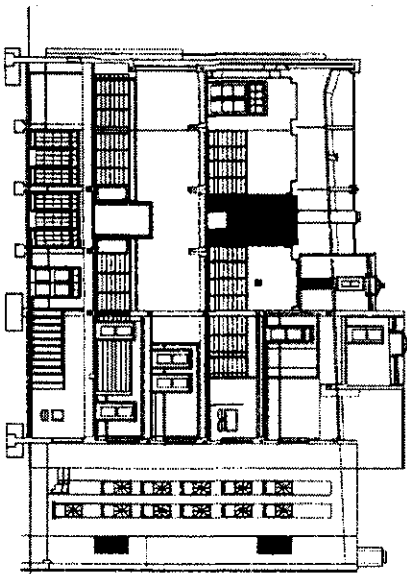
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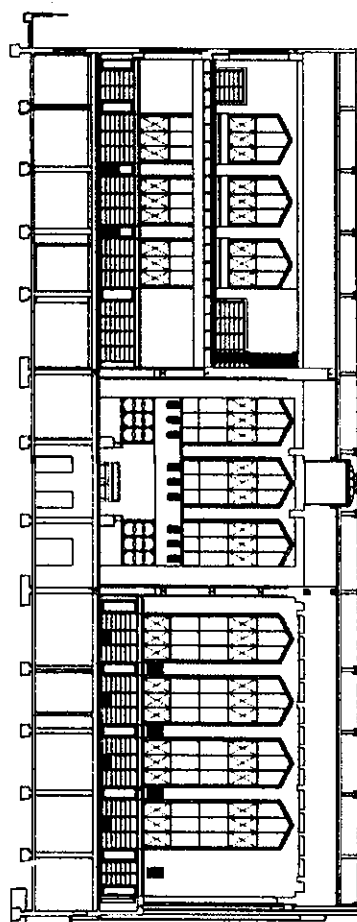
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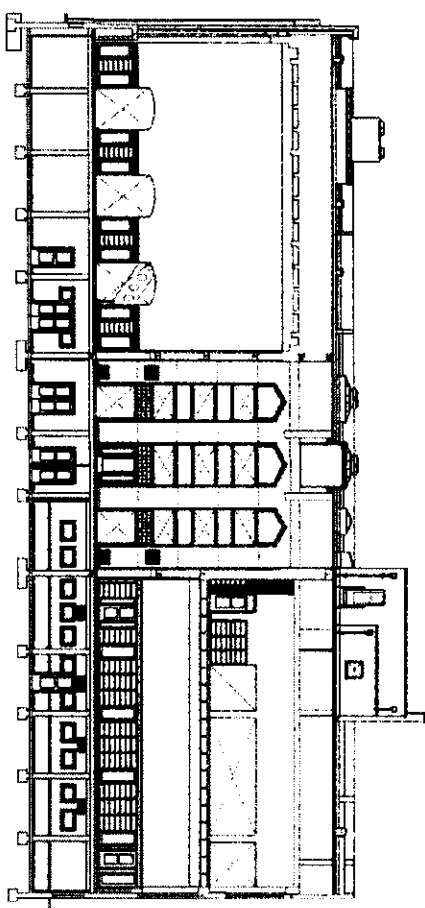
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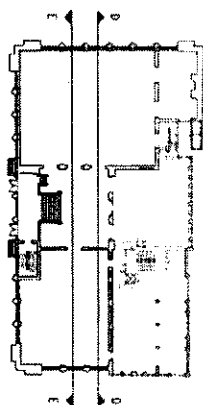
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1 LONGITUDINAL SECTION D-D



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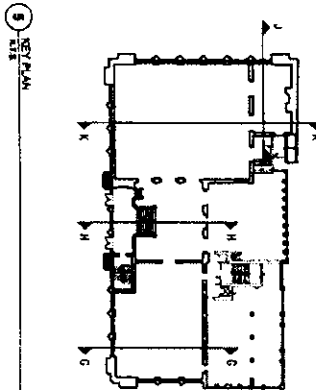
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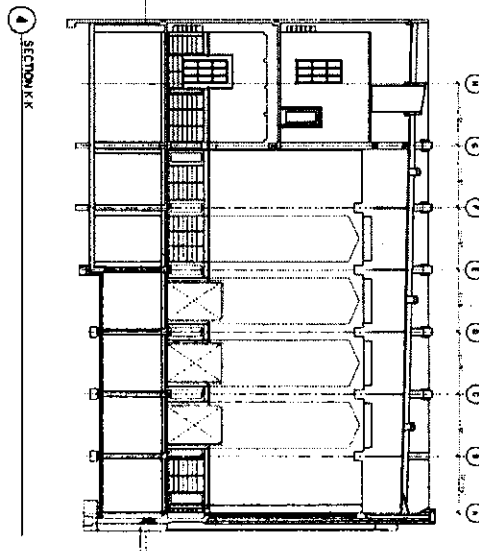
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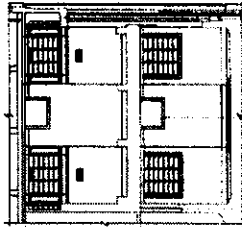
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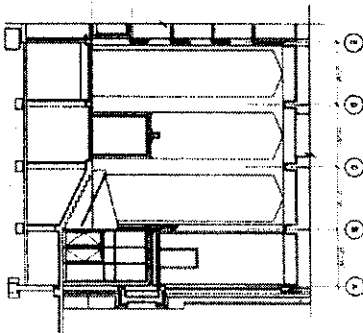
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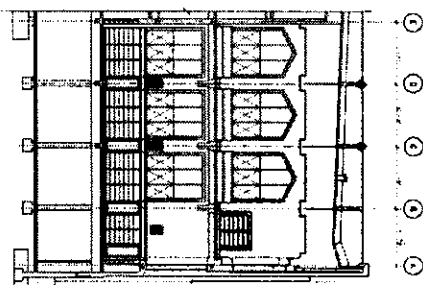
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